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Statement dated 6 April 2009 by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's configuration in Sierra Leone

The Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone warmly welcomes the joint communiqué signed on 2 April in the presence of the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone by the two leading parties of Sierra Leone: the All People's Congress and the Sierra Leone's Peoples Party. The country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone greatly appreciates the constructive efforts of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), under the leadership of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, and the diplomatic community in Freetown in facilitating a successful outcome to the deliberations of the biparty dialogue.

The joint communiqué represents a significant shared commitment between the two largest political parties to the consolidation of democracy and peace in Sierra Leone. It also demonstrates that political differences within young and fragile democracies can and should be resolved peacefully. The communiqué includes bipartisan agreement on the role of the ruling and opposition parties, the rejection of all forms of violence, including a strong condemnation of violence against women, mechanisms to investigate the inter-party violent clashes that occurred in March 2009, and a joint agreement to strengthen the professionalism of and respect for the operational independence of important democratic institutions such as the Parliament, the judiciary, the Sierra Leone police, the National Electoral Commission, the Political Party Registration Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Independent Media Commission.

These represent substantial agreements that will require not only the joint political will of both parties but also sustained support from the international community. The Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone encourages both political parties to maintain the spirit of moderation and reconciliation that prevailed during the biparty dialogue in order to ensure timely and effective follow-up to the joint communiqué. Continued national leadership and international support is also needed to address the remaining peacebuilding challenges of drug trafficking, youth unemployment and corruption. The serious threat posed by drug trafficking within the Economic Community of

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West African States (ECOWAS) subregion not only undermines border and maritime security, but also has lasting socio-economic consequences, especially with respect to youth empowerment and employment.

The Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone encourages the international community to provide the necessary assistance for the follow-up to the joint communiqué and to support the facilitation efforts of UNIPSIL in this regard. The country-specific configuration on Sierra Leone remains committed to supporting Sierra Leone in consolidating its progress towards peace, development and national reconciliation.